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FM AMCONSUL TIJUANA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9701

RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 6649

INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE

RUEHTM/AMCONSUL TIJUANA 2497

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TIJUANA 000015

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DS, CA, DS/IP/WHA, DS/TIA/PII, AND MEXICO CITY
FOR RSO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC KCRM SNAR MX CASC PINS PTER

SUBJECT: ANOTHER SERIES OF SHOOTING INCIDENTS NEAR US CONGEN TIJUANA

REF: TIJUANA 1275; B) TIJUANA 1144

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND CG COMMENT: Tijuana's latest wave of violence (reflets) continues, with a number of fresh assassinations of individuals apparently tied to the two main organized crime cartels. The Baja Attorney General told CG on January 7 that there is no sign that the renewed intra-cartel war is abating, but he affirmed that the government security services at all levels are working in crisis mode to reestablish order. One disturbing new trend appears to be willingness of the cartels to target family members. Following is a spot report from the Congen's EAC. END SUMMARY AND CG COMMENT.

¶2. (U) On January 5, 2010, Post's Emergency Action Committee (EAC) was convened to discuss two incidents of shooting near the U.S. Consulate General (USCG) which occurred the previous afternoon. EAC participants included CG, CONS, RSO, DEA, DHS-ICE, MGT, PAO, and ATF.

¶3. (SBU) On 01/04/10, departing staff members saw police units and road blockage at close of business due to two separate exchanges of gunfire in Mission residence neighborhoods. Mission personnel were not involved in the shooting incidents, but they occurred within a few blocks of where Mission personnel work and live, and hindered travel to Mission residential areas throughout the evening.

¶4. (SBU) U.S. Consulate General Tijuana's Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWG) informed the EAC that on 01/04/2010 at about 1700 hours, an exchange of gunfire in the streets in front of a popular Lomas Hipodromo shopping area (Soriano grocery store), left one victim dead in his vehicle. This drive-by shooting was within blocks of several Mission residences, about one-half mile from the Consulate main building. The target was allegedly connected to a drug cartel, shot and killed by rival cartel hit-men. Responsive police activity presence in the area slowed traffic for staff members leaving the Consulate, who observed the victim's bullet-riddled vehicle and significant police presence during their evening commute.

¶5. (SBU) The second shooting incident occurred within an hour about one mile away, injuring Josi Fernando Labastida Fimbres, a member of one of Tijuana's most prominent families (Fimbres family owns the Calimax grocery store chain). The victim died within a short time in a local hospital. This second shooting occurred on Merida street, a few blocks from the Principal Officer's residence (CGR), and within one-half mile of the Consulate main building. This route between the Consulate and the CGR was totally blocked for police investigation for more than an hour, requiring alternate routing of local guard mobile patrols.

¶ 6. (SBU) The two shootings of 01/04/10 were on opposite sides of the Consulate main building, so two separate Mission residence neighborhoods were impacted at the same time. That day, eight violent homicides were reported in Tijuana within a three hour period. LEWG informed the EAC that in the last few days, Tijuana has seen increased crime activity. Heavily armed police presence around the U.S. Consulate is visible and frequent, due to rival cartels targeting victims residing in the area.

¶ 7. (SBU) LEWG discussed with the EAC that the crime wave that has hit Tijuana in the last two months is due to a battle between organized crime cells. Reportedly "El Teo" and "El Ingeniero" aligned groups are attacking family members of the opposing cell as reprisals for prior deaths of group members. Local police forces appear to have an attitude of heightened alertness, and Post observes more police presence than usual.

¶ 8. (U) The recent spike in crime shows no signs of slowing. Since the EAC convened, additional drive-by shootings, murders, and a beheading have been reported throughout the city, including three minor children killed by a La Mesa district school on 01/06/10. In the morning of 01/07/10, gunfire erupted next to the NIV (visa) Annex building, during a high-speed police chase on the adjacent Via Rapida main road. The exchange of gunfire forced one employee's vehicle off the road to avoid the shooting. Although no employees were injured, that main route was blocked by the NIV Annex for several hours by the crashed suspects' car and police investigation. At the same time, a separate police checkpoint near Mission residences impeded access to that neighborhood near the Main Consulate building. In the last 24 hours, several kidnappings have also been reported nearby, including Tijuana Labor Secretary Josi Agustin Caldersn. The Labor Secretary and spouse were kidnapped from their home by an armed group dressed in police commando type clothing, but were released late last night under unknown

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circumstances.

¶ 9. (SBU) The EAC recommended Post personnel be advised of the situation. By security notice, RSO informed staff of the incidents and reminded all staff that Tijuana is rated as "critical" for crime by the Department of State Security Environment Threat List (SETL). The security notice reminded that everyone should always be aware of their surroundings, avoid conflict areas, vary routes, and practice good security measures. All post personnel had attended mandatory crime awareness and car-jacking avoidance training on 03/25/09 coordinated by RSO and provided by DS Mobile Security Training team (DS/MSD). RSO in-briefing relays this information to new arrivals to Post. RSO recommended to EAC that adult family members should attend mandatory security in-briefing along with newly posted officers. The training was relayed to local contract guards and mobile patrol also by RSO and included in their procedures.

¶ 10. (SBU) Tijuana's EAC will continue to monitor the any developments. RSO and Post's law enforcement representatives (LEWG) plan to monitor local contact information and local law enforcement counterparts for sharing of any future crime or threat information. For comments or questions, please contact RSO at 011-52-664-622-7464.

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